

CALIFORNIA

RURAL COUNTIES TASK FORCE

CELIA McADAM, CHAIR
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WALT ALLEN, SECRETARY
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(831) 775-0903

AGENDA

September 21, 2001
12:30 pm

Department of Transportation Building
1120 N Street, Room 2116 (Directors Meeting Room)
Sacramento, CA

12:30 pm	A.	Self Introductions	
12:35 pm	B.	Approval of Minutes from July 19, 2001	W. Allen
12:40 pm	C.	Final 2002 STIP Fund Estimate	R. Terry
12:50 pm	D.	State Only Funding Policy	J. Nicholas G. Murtey
1:05 pm	E.	Caltrans Performance Measures	J. Kashkooli
1:15 pm	F.	Draft Caltrans Regional Planning Handbook	B. Jaensch
1:30 pm	E.	RCTF Partnership/Resource Pooling	T. Abbott
	1.	Federal Aid Project Streamlining	C. McAdam
2:00 pm	F.	Environmental Streamlining Issues	A. Newsum
	1.	Habitat Conservation Plans	D. Landon
2:30 pm	G.	Update on Proposed Caltrans 10% Oversight Fee for Contracted Out Projects	N. Blumpied C. McAdam
2:45 pm	H.	Legislation	C. Oldham
	1.	AB 608 (Dickerson) re: Change to STIP guidelines, PPM funding	C. McAdam
	2.	Redirection of sales tax on gasoline to transportation – ACA 4	
3:00 pm	N.	Status Report on RCTF Issues	See attached list
3:30 pm		Adjourn	

DRAFT
California Rural Counties Task Force
May 18, 2001
Meeting Minutes

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: Final 2002 STIP Fund Estimate

Issue

The STIP fund estimate provides the basis upon which Regional Choice (also known as "county shares") and Interregional funds are calculated. Key components to this calculation include the actual amount of funds that will be available, as well as the various "off the top" funding allocations.

The Final 2002 STIP Fund Estimate was presented to and adopted by the CTC at their August 22 and 23 meeting in Sacramento. There were some very last minute changes to the fund estimate, which were distributed only the day before the scheduled hearing and adoption. Normally, the lateness of the information could be cause for concern, particularly as it leaves little time to analyze the changes to the assumptions. To mitigate some concerns, the CTC scheduled an impromptu information session on the afternoon of August 22, prior to the formal presentation and adoption at 8:30 am on August 23.

The net result is, the changed assumptions resulted in a modest increase to the County Shares.

Rick Terry and Jim Nicholas will discuss the changes to the assumptions and the impacts on the STIP Fund Estimate.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: State Only Funding Policy

Issue

The availability of state only funding is important for all regional transportation planning agencies, as it provides the state match for federal dollars on STIP funded projects. However, state only funds are particularly critical to applicants from small jurisdictions, as it provides relief from the significant paperwork and requirements imposed by Federal agencies.

The previous policy under SB 45 has been that all projects of \$750,000 or under were automatically provided with state only funds, until the \$300 million set aside for this purpose was exhausted. This threshold was met a few months ago and, at Caltrans' recommendation, the CTC imposed a temporary policy that all projects not currently programmed with state only funds would have to apply for and receive an exception to obtain state only funds.

A permanent policy for state only funding was proposed in July as part of the 2002 STIP Fund Estimate. The proposal was for all new projects to apply for and receive exceptions to receive state only funds. These exceptions would be granted at the time of allocation, and available on a year to year basis. There were numerous issues that needed further exploration, including:

- Applicants need to know at the time of programming if a project is state only or not
- Exceptions need to be granted for the entire project, not just phases
- Handling of CMAQ match, PPM funds, rideshare match, and other non-construction funds

Discussion

State only funding policy received a lot of attention at the July 25 STIP Fund Estimate Workshop held in Sacramento. One important outcome of that meeting was a recommendation that state only funding requests be provided as part of each RTIP submission. In that way, Caltrans and the CTC can look at all the state only funding requests as a whole, rather than piecemealing out exceptions.

The policy crafted by Caltrans HQ Programming, and subsequently adopted by the CTC at their August meeting, is attached.

The remaining issue is that of state-only funding requests outside of the STIP process. The discussion with Caltrans staff has indicated that these requests would be submitted and approved as part of any STIP amendments, but this has not been put in writing.

Either way, it is important that regions be very clear that state only funds are not a "sure thing", particularly if a request is submitted subsequent to the 2002 RTIP process. Regions interested in securing state only funds are strongly encouraged to make that request as part of their 2002 RTIP.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: Caltrans Performance Standards

Issue

Jahangir Kashkooli will make a brief presentation regarding Caltrans efforts to develop performance standards.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: Draft Caltrans Regional Planning Handbook

Issue

Caltrans has developed a draft Regional Planning Handbook on which they are seeking comments.

Discussion

Brigitte Jaensch will provide an overview of the Draft Caltrans Regional Planning Handbook. There will then be a discussion about any proposed changes, with consideration of comments to be provided.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: RCTF Partnership/Resource Pooling

Issue

Several ideas for improvements were discussed at our meeting with CTC Chair Lawrence, Commissioners Lindsey and Lawson, and CTC and Caltrans staff held July 19 to identify potential partnerships and resource pooling with rural areas. One of the critical areas identified as having both the best potential for improvement and the most importance was for Small Federal Aid Project Streamlining.

Discussion

The Small Federal Aid Streamlining Committee has met twice since the Partnership/Resource Pooling meeting in July.

Terry Abbott and Celia McAdam will provide an overview of the progress made by the group to date.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: Environmental Streamlining Issues

Issue

Many rural counties, including Butte, Amador/Calaveras/Alpine, and Placer, are experiencing problems with obtaining environmental clearances on major state highway projects.

Discussion

Some of the problems arise from the process that requires the project sponsors to communicate through Caltrans Environmental to FHWA to the federal resource agencies.

Caltrans shares the frustration of the project sponsors in bringing the federal part of the equation to the table. Attached please find a letter from Caltrans Director Jeff Morales to Secretary of Transportation Norm Mineta and "white paper" which outlines ways to streamline the interface between Caltrans and FHWA.

RCTF members are asked to review the letter and report, and consider how we may be able to assist or even accelerate in these streamlining efforts.

Some agencies are experiencing another issue with the resource agencies. The newest wrinkle is the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and/or Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) that requires a far broader approach to the mitigation process. Sharing of information and experiences of Task Force members on this issue will also be included in this item.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: Update on Proposed Caltrans 10% Oversight Fee for Contracted Out Projects

Issue

Caltrans has proposed a new policy that would charge project sponsors a 10% surcharge for oversight on support costs for all contracted out projects.

Caltrans currently provides oversight on state highway projects funded via sales-tax authorities through an "off the top" allocation of STIP funds. This new policy would apply only to Regional Choice funded projects, including those currently in the STIP. The financial implications of this policy in rural counties could be significant.

At our July meeting, Nigel Blumpied presented a response to our June 28 letter expressing our concerns with this draft policy.

Discussion

Though Mr. Blumpied answered many of the questions posed in the June 28 letter, the result was no change in the consensus position that the proposed 10% oversight fee would unfairly burden rural counties. Specifically, the oversight fee for self-help county projects on state highways is taken "off the top" of the STIP fund estimate; the proposed policy would require a project specific assessment for non-self-help county projects that were contracted out.

Subsequent discussions amongst the Regional Transportation Planning Agency group's subcommittee echoed the concern that, if the oversight fee is to be charged, that self-help counties should be treated the same as non-self-help counties. These issues have been communicated with the Self-Help Counties Coalition, which has now appointed its own subcommittee.

Also, as suggested at the July RCTF meeting, representatives from the RCTF are scheduled to meet with Wes Lujan of the Regional Council of Rural Counties on September 21 to discuss the potential for a legislative solution.

An update of all these activities will be provided at the RCTF meeting.

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To: Rural Counties Task Force Participants

From: Celia McAdam, Chair

SUBJECT: Legislation - AB 608, ACA 4

Background

AB 608

RCTF members have met with the leadership of the Regional Council of Rural Counties to provide technical information and advice on transportation issues for rural areas. At the request of RCRC, Assemblyman Dick Dickerson (R-Redding) has sponsored AB 608, which would:

- require cost savings from projects funded by Regional Choice money to be returned to the sponsoring county for reprogramming. The legislation proposes that when the engineer's estimate is 20% over or under the programmed amount, the excess would be deducted from or reallocated to the sponsoring county's share.
- increase in the permissible allocations for planning, programming, and monitoring (PPM) from 2% to 5% for RTPAs, and from ½% to 1% for MPOs.

Status: As of this writing, the bill is in the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file. However, all bills must be acted upon by the September 14, 2001 legislative deadline, or be passed over into the next legislative session. The current status of the bill will be provided at the Task Force meeting.

ACA 4

This bill was a fast-tracked effort that placed on the March 2002 ballot a constitutional amendment that would permanently direct the sales tax on gasoline to transportation purposes, to take effect at the conclusion of the Traffic Congestion Relief Program in 2008-09. This also specifies the formula that 40% of the funds go to cities and counties for road rehabilitation, 40% to the STIP, and 20% to the Public Transportation Account.

Status: Proving the wonders that can be accomplished by the State Legislature when they set their minds to it, this language was amended into ACA 4 on July 20, passed through the Legislature on July 23, and was signed into law by the Governor on July 26.

Task Force members may want to discuss ways to educate their local areas about the benefits of a permanent flow of sales tax on gasoline to transportation purposes.

RCTF ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES
Report for September 21, 2001

Issue/Objective

CTC Representative SB 45 Implementation Changes Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan (ITSP) Rural Transit (FTA 5310, Welfare to Work, CalACT)	Darin Grossi, Tuolumne
Formulas for Distribution of Local Road Funds SB 45 Project Monitoring/Reporting Database	Walt Allen, Monterey
Increase PPM Funds RSTP/CMAQ/TEA Project Delivery Committee RCTF Dues	Dan Landon, Nevada
Local Road Rehab Funding & STIP Protection Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Applicability to Rural Counties TEA Advisory Committee	Phil Dow, Lake & Mendocino
Formulas for Distribution of Local Road Funds California Transportation Investment Strategy (CTIS) ITS Applicability to Rural Counties	George Dondero, Calaveras
Committee to Review Changes to Local Assistance And Guidelines Manual	Liz Levine, Madera
City/County/Caltrans/FHWA Coordinating Group and Local Assistance "Enhanced Training Committee"	Spencer Clifton, Humboldt
State Planning Guidelines Development Quality Team Clarify/Improve OWP Process Interregional Strategic Transportation Plan (ITSP)	Charles Field, Amador
Local Road Rehab Funding & STIP Protection Federal Aid Project Streamlining (AB 1012) Civil Rights Review Title 9 TEA-3 Federal Reauthorization	Celia McAdam, Placer